EXHIBITION CALENDAR 2023-24

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Calder: In Motion, The Shirley Family Collection
Seattle Art Museum
November 8, 2023–August 4, 2024

Calder: In Motion debuts for the first time to the public all 45 artworks by Alexander Calder, as well as lithographs and ephemera, gifted to the museum in 2023 by Jon and Kim Shirley. It also inaugurates a multi-year initiative of exhibitions, programs, and artistic and institutional collaborations centered on Calder. The exhibition is curated by José Carlos Diaz, Susan Brotman Deputy Director for Art, and features work from every decade of the American artist's career, including iconic mobiles, stabiles, standing mobiles, wire sculptures, a constellation, and works on paper, as well as a significant oil painting.

To accentuate the artist’s exploration of height, scale, and movement, the exhibition will be installed in the museum's double-height galleries—a unique space for large-scale works, with several overlooks from the floor above. The exhibition design will capture a sense of movement, with an S-shaped, curved wall that wraps around the 22-foot-tall sculpture Red Curly Tail (1970) and divides the galleries into a series of vignettes illuminating the exhibition’s themes and highlighting the elegance and lyricism of Calder’s work.

The central gallery will trace Calder’s career, highlighting his achievement through works that range from the miniature to the monumental. The expansive Toile d’araignée (1965), an airy, monochromatic mobile will hover over several works below, including the masterful standing mobile Bougainvillier (1947) and the large-scale Red Curly Tail (1970).

The final gallery will consider the artist’s legacy, with works that demonstrate Calder’s accomplishments throughout his most productive decades and the impact his work has had on the development of modern art. This gallery will also serve as a bridge into the museum’s modern and contemporary galleries, which feature permanent collection works by contemporaries of Calder and others influenced by his practice.
Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence, from the Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Seattle Art Museum
October 19, 2023–January 21, 2024

Thanks to the popularity of the instantly recognizable Great Wave—cited everywhere from book covers to Lego sets, anime, and even an emoji—Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) has become one of the most famous Japanese artists in the world. Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence explores the fascinating life and enduring legacy of this trailblazing master by pairing more than 100 of his woodblock prints, paintings, and illustrated books with more than 200 works by his teachers, students, rivals, and admirers.

This new approach to presenting Hokusai’s work demonstrates his impact through centuries and around the globe, seen in works by his daughter Katsushika Ōi; his contemporaries Utagawa Hiroshige and Utagawa Kuniyoshi; 19th-century American and European painters, including Henri Rivière and Félix Bracquemond; and modern and contemporary artists such as Helen Frankenthaler, Yoshitomo Nara, and Chiho Aoshima. Each gallery features modern and contemporary works alongside those by Hokusai and his contemporaries for a more dynamic experience.

Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence is on view at the Seattle Art Museum and curated by Sarah E. Thompson, Curator of Japanese Art at the MFA Boston. She collaborated with Kendall DeBoer, Curatorial Assistant in the Department of Contemporary Art, on the contemporary selections. José Carlos Diaz, SAM’s Susan Brotman Deputy Director for Art, oversaw SAM’s presentation.

The exhibition debuted earlier this year in Boston; this is the only West Coast stop for its national tour. It also marks the first time nearly all of these works have been seen outside of Boston or Japan. “We are thrilled to share works from the MFA Boston—home to one of the largest and most significant collections of Hokusai’s works in the world—with Seattle audiences,” says Thompson. Adds Diaz, “Hokusai’s tireless creativity left a massive and enthralling body of work. I hope visitors find that the works by Hokusai and his contemporaries are just as fresh as the modern and present-day works.”
A popular Haitian proverb says: “Remember the rain that makes your corn grow.” This expression of gratitude, remembrance, perseverance, and an understanding of the connectedness between heaven and earth resonates across the works in this gallery.

A group of mid-20th century Haitian paintings form a jumping-off point. Vibrantly colored and graphically rendered, each painting presents a narrative scene that draws on different vantage points of Haitian life: the relationships between landscape and community, between spirituality and the earthly environment, or the mundane thrums of daily life.

The strong sense of storytelling reflected in these paintings is echoed in Barbara Earl Thomas’s works, which draw on mythic or folkloric iconography as much as lived experience to depict epic tales of catastrophe and heroism that unfold before your eyes. In Jamaican artist Ebony Patterson’s work, we see a narrative at its abrupt end: a person lying facedown, hidden among ornately decorated flora. Her use of vivid colors and shiny sequins layered over the macabre scene cites bling funerals, a popular practice in Kingston’s working class communities expressing the sentiment, “You may not have noticed me when I was alive, but you will damn well see me as I leave.”

Meanwhile, the stone sculptures of small animals by James Washington, Jr., are earthly in material and subject but resonate with what the artist described as a “spiritual force.”
Reverberations: Contemporary Art and Modern Classics
Seattle Art Museum
Ongoing

Each new generation of artists responds to and builds on the art of earlier periods. Bringing together artworks that bridge decades, Reverberations seeks to spark a hum between historical works and those by artists working today.

Organized in thematic groups, Reverberations introduces a different topic in each gallery, ranging from landscape and lyrical abstraction to the use of the body in addressing psychological, social, and political concerns. As you move through the modern and contemporary galleries, you will encounter harmonies and dissonance as younger artists stake their claim. In turn, works from earlier decades will acquire new meaning and new layers of relevance.

This installation draws from SAM’s growing collection and incorporates many works acquired in recent years, many of which are on view for the first time. The museum’s ongoing commitment to building a collection with equity and diverse points of view can be seen when perusing the galleries.
Biodiversity inspires this selection of works, encouraging us to take a break from looking at one another and instead carefully watch the other species in our midst.

You’ll find ultra-tiny octopuses from Japan, an elegant local heron who sits on high alert, and a frog and whale in glass. Fish swim into view, from carps with twisting tails to a shark with a torpedo-like body. Some creatures take on mythic features, as seen in a sea serpent and a possible pig vertebrae/leaf spirit.

Finally, a sawfish emerges with a signature nose that has almost led to the species’ extinction. While we savor our time watching such companions, we also know that many are endangered by our notorious arrogance and we must pay more attention to their needs.
American Art: The Stories We Carry
Seattle Art Museum
Ongoing

This exhibition is the first major reinstallation of the museum’s American art collection in 15 years. Funded primarily by a $1 million grant from The Mellon Foundation and a $75,000 grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art, the exhibition brings the museum’s historical American collection—predominately comprised of works by artists of European descent—into conversation with Native, Asian American, African American, and Latinx art, including contemporary art and new acquisitions and commissions. The galleries feature regular rotations.

*The Stories We Carry* is the result of a two-year process and an unprecedented level of collaboration among SAM curators and staff, regional artists, and advisors from the Seattle community. Two key goals of the project were to create a new interpretive framework for the American art galleries that brings forward historically excluded narratives and artistic forms and to deepen the museum’s commitment to inclusive exhibition-planning practices. The project was led by Theresa Papanikolas, Ann M. Barwick Curator of American Art, in partnership with Barbara Brotherton, Curator of Native American Art.

Collaborators on the project to interrogate and recontextualize the collection were artists Nicholas Galanin (Tlingit/Unangax̂, b. 1979) and Wendy Red Star (Apsáalooke, b. 1981), who created new commissions; artist and co-founder of Wa Na Wari Inye Wokoma, who curated a gallery in the exhibition; four emerging museum professionals in paid curatorial and conservation internships; and an advisory circle comprised of 11 experts from the Seattle area.

“With this project, Barbara and I are seeking ways to expand the American art canon and challenge fixed definitions of American art,” says Papanikolas. “Collaborating with our many partners has brought fresh perspectives to this work as well as a layer of accountability not always present in exhibition planning. The reinstalled galleries are not only the physical manifestation of this process, but also, we hope, an incubator for ever-evolving ideas of what American art can and should be.”
Deities & Demons: Supernatural in Japanese Art
Seattle Art Museum
Ongoing

Why are deer, foxes, and mythical creatures in Japanese art considered sacred? What is the long-tailed turtle or the six-armed ferocious demon? Japanese folklore, Shinto (an indigenous religion that reveres nature), and Buddhism have furnished fascinating subjects and ideas for imagery over many centuries. This installation of paintings, sculptures, prints, and textiles from the museum’s collection presents the rich visual culture of the supernatural in Japan.

In literature, theater, and visual arts embracing the supernatural, physical and spiritual crossover is a common theme: fierce demons sometimes can be deities in disguise, and animals can shapeshift to human beings. Representations of yurei (ghosts)—inspired by either historical events or popular tales—perhaps have the most varied forms. Each artist deeply mines their own imagination, as the examples here showcase.
By land and by sea, the premodern global world was deeply interconnected. This exhibition narrates a few of the many stories related to the Silk Roads and maritime routes, where innumerable transnational artistic traditions emerged.

A monumental deerskin map provides a commanding view of Tainan, a port city with Dutch-built fortresses and Chinese and indigenous residents. In a reversal of Chinoiserie, an imperial mirror shows Chinese palaces set within a pastoral European landscape. The blue-and-white ceramics on view recall Chinese porcelains but are in fact inventive Vietnamese commercial wares whose profitable path to market was interrupted after their transportation was shipwrecked.

Each appropriation represents a claim of advantage—whether over strategic territory, in artistic and technological sophistication, or business innovation. Each also embodies curiosity, a desire for new knowledge through borrowing from the unfamiliar “other.”
Honoring 50 Years of Papunya Tula Paintings
Seattle Art Museum
Through April 14, 2024

50,000 years of Indigenous knowledge were largely ignored until 1971, so elders in the central deserts of Australia began to paint. Their results are both contemporary and ancient, encouraging outsiders to see their country as full of eternal vitality. SAM’s selection will cover the last 50 years of this flourishing movement by the oldest living culture on earth.
Inspired by a single historical event, in this gallery we consider the notion that actions speak louder than words. In 1970, Chancellor Willy Brandt became the first German ruler to visit the country of Poland since Nazi Germany invaded in 1939. Rather than make a speech, Brandt laid a wreath on a monument to the thousands of Jewish people killed in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943. Then he knelt down and silently bowed his head. Photographs of this gesture circulated around the world. Over 40 years later, Seattle sculptor Akio Takamori memorialized Brandt’s mute apology as a moving expression of deference and humility rarely practiced by today’s leaders.

Brandt’s kneeling position recalls the submissive posture shown in a European religious painting he commissioned—look for the small figure gazing up in adoration in the painting *Virgin and Child with Donor* by Bernardo Daddi in the same gallery. Kneeling also reflects the attitude of a penitent saint humbled by his own sinfulness. But gestures can also be uplifting—a raised hand encourages elevated thoughts. And sometimes, collective love—whether joyful or grief-stricken—generates a flow of gestures and responses that unite the whole community.
Over vast geographical expanses and several millennia, a mosaic of cultures developed in ancient Mesoamerica and the Andean regions of South America. Some of these diverse cultures evolved from humble agricultural communities into complex cultural centers with spectacular cities and refined arts. Each had sophisticated belief systems about the origins of the universe and the roles of all the human and supernatural beings contained within. Ritual protocols—like shamanic transformations, human alliances with animal spirit companions, and the reenactment of myths—blurred the boundaries between the human and cosmic zones.

The arts in this gallery depict ancestors, humans, gods, supernatural animals, and monsters in ceramic, stone, shell, and animal. Visual symbols and narratives seen on ceremonial vessels, tomb sculptures, and personal adornment illuminate how early peoples grappled with the fundamental questions of existence, immortality, and the nature of the universe around them.
Lessons from the Institute of Empathy
Seattle Art Museum
Ongoing

Contemporary artist Saya Woolfalk (b. 1979) is known for her multimedia explorations of hybridity, science, race, and sex. Now on view in SAM’s African art galleries is Woolfalk’s immersive installation *ChimaTEK: Virtual Chimeric Space*, which was part of the museum’s 2015 exhibition *Disguise: Masks and Global African Art* and was recently acquired for SAM’s permanent collection.

*Virtual Chimeric Space* imagines an entirely new virtual population, the Empathics, who chronicle their alternative view of the universe. Through their nonprofit research society, Institute of Empathy (IoE), the Empathics have founded ChimaTEK corporation, with a trademarked process for self-transformation that prepares individuals and organizations to engage more empathically with the posthumanist populace of our networked, globalized age.

Now, three Empathics have moved into the Seattle Art Museum and established a virtual space where visitors can step outside their normal, routine self and improve their ability to understand others. Also on view with their “showroom” is art from SAM’s African art collection that the Empathics selected to help awaken their empathy.
John Grade: Middle Fork
Seattle Art Museum
Ongoing

*Middle Fork*, a large-scale sculpture by Seattle-based artist John Grade, is presented in its largest iteration yet. More than doubling from its previous length of 50 feet to 105 feet, the tree sculpture dynamically spans the entire length of the Brotman Forum, the main entrance lobby that welcomes guests to the museum.

The highly detailed sculpture was created by Grade, his team, and a cadre of volunteers using a full plaster cast of a living old-growth western hemlock tree found in the Cascade Mountains east of Seattle. The cast was used as a mold to assemble a new tree from now nearly one million reclaimed cedar pieces. Suspended horizontally from the museum’s ceiling and above the viewer, Grade’s sculpture offers a mesmerizing new perspective on a familiar form.

With its exhibition at SAM, *Middle Fork* returns home to Washington State. The work was first conceived and built at MadArt Studio and had its Seattle debut there in January 2015. Following that, it was included in the *WONDER* exhibition at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC (November 13, 2015–May 13, 2016) and was recently displayed at the 2017 Davos World Economic Forum in Switzerland.

With each iteration, *Middle Fork* has “grown” larger and added more branches. The artist plans over time to continue the sculpture’s growth to match the length of the living tree that it is based on, 140 feet. Eventually, he plans to bring the sculpture back to the forest, allowing it to decompose and return to the earth at the base of that original tree.
Art and Life Along The Northwest Coast
Seattle Art Museum
Ongoing

Over their long habitation of the Pacific Northwest, First Peoples have shaped their lifeways around the resources of the water, forests, valleys, and mountains. In tandem, they have developed rich oral traditions and ceremonies that link inextricably to this region.

With this installation of SAM’s collection of Northwest Coast art, visitors will encounter the creative expressions of generations of artists who created forms for daily life, for potlatch ceremonies, and for spiritual balance. The presence of contemporary arts, shown alongside historical forms, highlight the vitality of traditions that are being re-envisioned for present times.

The installation also includes a new acquisition: twelve masks representing supernatural creatures associated with the Animals Spirits Dance by Gwaysdams carver Sam Johnson. Originally commissioned for the opening celebration of the Pacific Science Center’s Seamonster House in 1971, the masks were transferred to SAM in 2006 and are now on view for the first time.

The interpretation and context for the masks are being defined through a collaboration with community members. The colorful, boldly carved masks represent a modern interpretation of the principles of Kwakwaka’wakw art and the dramatic nature of the dance privilege associated with them. The twelve masks—representing mouse, raccoon, deer, wolf and others—and a commissioned button blanket to adorn one of the masks, will be installed in July, 2026, accompanied by a video of the masks being danced in 1971. This display compliments the interactive video component about the history of the houseposts that will be installed in an adjacent gallery.
France: Inside and Out
Seattle Art Museum
Ongoing

This installation of landscapes, domestic interiors, and decorative arts from the museum’s collection showcases stylistic developments in 19th-century French painting and design. It also invites us to think about the different worlds of men and women at that time.

Beginning in the middle of the century, male artists began to paint outside, capturing intimate landscape views near Paris, scenes of laborers in the fields, and dramatic coastline vistas. The sense of immediacy that permeates those landscapes can also be found when artists turned their attention indoors. Like Vermeer before them, they were fascinated by the unremarkable moments of daily life at home.

Images of women, somewhere between formal portrait and genre scene, give a limited picture of female lives toward the end of the century. The two women artists featured in this installation represent the beginning of broader opportunities for women, but even as they developed professional careers their subject matter was limited to family scenes, still lifes, and portraits.
Porcelain Room
Seattle Art Museum
Ongoing

Vast quantities of translucent, elegantly decorated white-bodied porcelain from China and Japan, arriving in Europe in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, heightened Europeans’ fervor for these wondrous wares. In royal palaces, great houses of the aristocracy, and homes of the rising merchant class made wealthy by trade, specially designed rooms showcased porcelain from floor to ceiling as crowning jewels in an integrated architectural and decorative scheme.

Brimming with more than one thousand magnificent European and Asian pieces from SAM’s collection, the Porcelain Room has been conceived to blend visual excitement with an historical concept. Rather than the standard museum installation arranged by nationality, manufactory, and date, our porcelain is grouped by color and theme. Today, when porcelain is everywhere in our daily lives, this room evokes a time when it was a treasured trade commodity—sometimes rivaling the value of gold—that served as a cultural, technological, and artistic interchange between the East and the West.
Elizabeth Malaska: All Be Your Mirror
Seattle Art Museum
November 17, 2022–June 16, 2024

This solo exhibition celebrates Portland artist Elizabeth Malaska, the winner of the 2022 Betty Bowen Award, SAM’s annual award honoring a Northwest artist for their original, exceptional, and compelling work.

Malaska’s grand tableaux respond to a history of Western painting and power dynamics that often assigns women the roles of submissive accessories. In search of more potent and less pleasing feminine subjects, her tour de force paintings unpack historical genres—such as the reclining nude—and offer up challenging and introspective visions.
Jaune Quick-to-See Smith: Memory Map
Seattle Art Museum
February 29–May 12, 2024

One of the most innovative and powerful artists of her generation, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (b. 1940, citizen of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation) has broken barriers and forged new paths for contemporary American art. This exhibition—the largest and most comprehensive showing of her work to date—brings together over five decades of Smith’s paintings, prints, drawings, and sculptures in an immersive journey through her singular blend of modern art strategies and Indigenous cultural practices.

Smith’s work engages the languages of abstraction, expressionism, and Pop Art to interrogate American life and identity from a Native perspective. Through humor and satire, she inverts historical narratives to expose the absurdities in the formation of dominant discourses and question why certain visual languages are valued over others. Across decades and mediums, her approach blurs boundaries and activates images and ideas culled from history, mapping, environmentalism, popular culture, and mass media. Her impact—visible not only in her artwork but also in her activism and her curatorial practice—has positioned contemporary Native American art at the center of today’s critical dialogues around land, social justice, preservation, and sustainability.

This exhibition was organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
Seattle Asian Art Museum
July 21–December 3, 2023

This exhibition explores the shared subversive hedonism of both Japanese ukiyo-e prints and the work of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Through around 90 impressions drawn from the Seattle Art Museum’s Japanese prints collection as well as private holdings of Toulouse-Lautrec’s work, this exhibition offers a revealing look at the renegade spirit in the graphic arts in both late 18th- to 19th-century Edo (present-day Tokyo) and late 19th-century Paris, highlighting the social impulses—pleasure-seeking and theatergoing—behind the burgeoning art production.

The intriguing formal and thematic parallels between these two eras of graphic arts has been explored, but less so the shared sociopolitical connections. The Edo period (1603–1868) and fin-de-siècle Paris both saw rising middle classes that challenged the status quo and expressed antiestablishment attitudes. Bohemian sectors were home to subversive impulses that generated vibrant cultures and new forms of visual art. Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901) is particularly indebted to Japanese prints, in particular to those by Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806); he was often referred to as “Montmartre’s Utamaro.”

Vast, vibrant, and rapidly changing, Asia is a fertile ground for contemporary artists. The seven artists in Be/longing were born in different parts of Asia: India, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. They have all spent time or moved outside of Asia. Their experiences as both insiders and outsiders have compelled them to explore their Asian heritage from multiple perspectives. Their works, as a result, are at once Asian and global.

Drawn from the museum’s collection and one private collection, these works comment on fundamental concerns of who we are and where we belong. These are not new issues, but they are more relevant than ever in an age when the world is becoming more diverse and mobile. Working in a variety of mediums, the artists address topics such as individuals and their places in changing societies, the past and its lingering presence, and the ambiguity and complexity of gender. Viewers will find artworks that are in turn daring, poetic, or sarcastic and that invite us to pause and look, wander and ponder.
As the world’s largest and most populated continent, Asia is not uniform or fixed: its boundaries shift, its people and cultures are diverse, and its histories are complex. After a transformative renovation, the Seattle Asian Art Museum—one of only a few Asian art museums in the United States—reopens with a presentation that embraces this complexity. You will not find galleries labeled by geography. Instead, works from different cultures and from ancient to contemporary times come together to tell stories about Asia in a non-linear narrative.

The galleries are organized around 12 themes central to Asia’s arts and societies such as worship and celebration, visual arts and literature, and clothing and identity. The south galleries feature art inspired by spiritual life and the north galleries show art inspired by material life. Some objects relate to both the spiritual and material realms and are a testament to art’s layered meanings.

Each artwork tells its own story of when, where, how, and why it was made. But when seemingly disparate artworks are displayed together, meaningful connections and questions emerge. Explore our renowned collection and discover ideas across time and across Asia.
Anida Yoeu Ali: Hybrid Skin, Mythical Presence
Seattle Asian Art Museum
January 18–July 7, 2024

Tacoma-based international artist Anida Yoeu Ali makes her SAM debut with this solo exhibition that explores performance as an art form. In her work, Ali enacts fantastic mythical heroines as assertions of feminist, queer, and alternative visibilities. These personas are hybrids of different religious aesthetics to disrupt ideas around otherness. Her performances are invitations for viewers to wander, witness, and joyfully experience moments that transcend the ordinary. Central to many of her performances is her use of textiles, a practice rooted in her Cham-Muslim refugee migration experience—her family fled Cambodia with only the clothes on their backs.

This exhibition explores two of Ali’s iconic performances: The Buddhist Bug and The Red Chador. A creation myth sprung from her interest in transcendence, humor, and spiritual turmoil, The Buddhist Bug features a huge saffron-colored creature that Ali enacts in performance. Responding to a global rise of Islamophobia, misogyny, and racism, The Red Chador is an ongoing series of silent public interventions and documented performances that challenge perceptions and fears of the “other.” During the run of the exhibition, Ali will enact the works in two separate performances. On view in the galleries will be artworks that extend the performative moment and Ali’s presence into video, photography, and installation.
OLYMPIC SCULPTURE PARK – NOW ON VIEW

This award-winning nine-acre park on Seattle's waterfront is free and open to the public 365 days a year. The sculpture park offers monumental contemporary sculptures and breathtaking views of the Space Needle, Olympic Mountains, and Puget Sound. A 2,200-foot path zigzags from the park’s entrance to the water’s edge.

Artworks include:

- **Eye Benches I** (1996–1997), Louise Bourgeois
- **Eye Benches II** (1996–1997), Louise Bourgeois
- **Eye Benches III** (1996–1997), Louise Bourgeois
- **Father and Son** (2005), Louise Bourgeois
- **The Eagle** (1971), Alexander Calder
- **Neukom Vivarium** (2006), Mark Dion
- **Bunyon’s Chess** (1965), Mark di Suvero
- **Schubert Sonata** (1992), Mark di Suvero
- **Seattle Cloud Clover** (2006), Teresita Fernández
- **Curve XXIV** (1981), Ellsworth Kelly
- **Love & Loss** (2005–2006), Roy McMakin
- **Untitled** (2004–2007), Roy McMakin
- **Sky Landscape I** (1976–1983), Louise Nevelson
- **Split** (2003), Roxy Paine
- **Perre’s Ventaglio III** (1967), Beverly Pepper
- **Persephone Unbound** (1999), Beverly Pepper
- **Echo** (2011), Jaume Plensa
- **Two Plane Vertical Horizontal Variation III** (1973), George Rickey
- **Mary’s Invitation – A Place to Regard Beauty** (2014), Ginny Ruffner
- **Wake** (2002–2003), Richard Serra
- **Wandering Rocks** (1967–1974), Tony Smith
- **Stinger** (1967–68/1999), Tony Smith